

June 12, 2015

City of Minneapolis Council Members:

We are writing today to request that you vote against the staff recommendation to authorize the City of Minneapolis' Property Services division to begin negotiations with the owners of Roof Depot at 1860 28th Street East and 2717 Longfellow Avenue South for municipal acquisition and operations. This proposal will be before the Ways and Means Committee on June 15, 2015 and the full City Council on June 19, 2015.

The Native American Community Development Institute is an intermediary organization working to build a better future for American Indian people within the Twin Cities metropolitan area. We are based in Minneapolis and have a deep commitment to the Phillips Community Area as a place with the most concentrated urban American Indian population in the country and a long history of the community in this place. Our community suffers alarming health disparities compared to Caucasians and even other Communities of Color. There are a disproportionate number of polluting facilities and other carcinogens in Phillips. Our work to build a healthy American Indian community is negatively impacted by the location of facilities that are damaging to the health of people in the community.

We believe that the City acquisition of Roof Depot does not align with the City's own racial equity work and expressed commitment to supporting environmental justice. The Phillips area is designated by the Met Council as a Racially Concentrated Area of Poverty—it is a majority low-income, Indigenous and People of Color community with more children (a vulnerable population) than any other neighborhood in Minneapolis. East Phillips is a Residential Arsenic Superfund site, and one of two areas in Hennepin County with the highest incidences of elevated blood lead levels and asthma hospitalizations in small children (the other being the near Northside of Minneapolis). It is the site of a foundry, an open air hot asphalt plant, and already carries the burden of two industrially-zoned City of Minneapolis facilities—a garbage transfer station and a Public Works facility.

The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth states that "Through promoting and protecting the civil rights of the citizens of Minneapolis, sources of environmental pollution will not be concentrated in neighborhoods of one race or ethnicity, near sensitive populations, or in economically disadvantaged areas." By putting the water distribution function in East Phillips, the City would be further concentrating air pollution and negatively impacting air quality by adding more heavy truck traffic and welding emissions to this already environmentally overburdened community.

We are deeply concerned about the lack of community engagement and transparency around this proposal. Despite the lack of consultation with the community, the residents of East Phillips and their Neighborhood organization, cultural groups, and faith communities have come together and held a series of robust community conversations about the City's proposal. Residents have expressed a multitude of concerns related to this project: the environmental and livability impacts of increased truck traffic, emissions associated with welding, and that this proposal would take a piece of prime industrial land off the tax rolls permanently without bringing any good jobs to the community. They have come together and are calling on their elected officials to say no to the acquisition of the Roof Depot site by the City of Minneapolis.

We hope we can count on you to stand with the Phillips community by voting against the staff recommendation to begin negotiating for the purchase of the Roof Depot site.

Sincerely,

Jay Bad Heart Bull

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